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ABSTRACT

Described in the booklet are the history and functions of the All-Russia Society for the Blind which was founded in 1925 to improve the physical, educational, and employment conditions of the more than 300,000 Russian people who before 1917 became blind from disease and poverty. The society is said to have units in the 15 constituent Soviet Republics and a voluntary membership of 163,800 blind and partially sighted persons. Noted is the decrease of blind adults to one third and of blind children to one fifth of the 1917 figure. Discussed are the following functions of the society: provision for factory and local (farm) branches; cooperation on problems of the blind with ministries responsible for areas such as social security, the state publishing house, and research institutes; provision for vocational training in work rehabilitation schools, locations such as the society's enterprises, and specialized schools; provision for employment of 76,500 blind or partially sighted persons in the society's factories or farms, state factories and professions; management of enterprises in which 70-90 percent of the blind engage in direct production processes, and which allocate 75 percent of net profits (25 percent of profits go to the state) to components of the society; and provision for farm jobs such as carpenters (partially sighted) and for coopers (blind). Also discussed are blind scholars' contributions to professional fields such as biology; education for 9,500 blind and partially sighted children in 68 residential schools; recreation activities such as drama in 129 centers; and welfare services such as housing. (MC)

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B Zinn

TO LIVE AND WORK

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B. Zimin

TO LIVE AND WORK

ALL-RUSSIA SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND

NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY PUBLISHING HOUSE MOSCOW

Foreword

This booklet does not lay any claim to being a complete historical outline of, or a literary essay on, the problem. The motive in writing it has been this. In recent years there has been increased interest abroad in the activities of the All-Russia Society for the Blind (V.O.S.). The Central Board of the Society has been receiving letters from similar organizations abroad, charity bodies and individuals in many countries of the world, asking for first-hand information about the blind in the Soviet Union.

In response to their requests, this author has attempted to give a concise sketch of what the All-Russia Society for the Blind is like, throwing some light on the welfare of the blind in this country, including employment, cultural activity, and material and social amenities.

My wish has been to show the concern the Soviet Government displays for the Society and blind people.

Although the booklet is about the All-Russia Society, everything stated here fully applies to the Societies and the well-being of the blind in the other Union Republics.

The booklet will have served its purpose if, on reading it, the reader gets a clearer view of the life of the blind in the Soviet Union and finds answers to his questions.

B. ZIMIN,
Chairman, Central Board,
All-Russia Society for the
Blind

I

Looking Back

According to official sources published before the October 1917 Revolution, there were 300,000 totally blind people in Russia. If we class as blind all persons with a visual acuity of 0.08 (8 per cent vision), as is the practice now, this figure would grow to over 600,000.

The main causes of blindness were trachoma, small-pox blennorrhea and other diseases so common in the country at that time. The situation was still further aggravated by the fact that the huge Russian Empire had only a few hundred oculists.

Because of their vast numbers, the lack of effective methods for the prevention or treatment of blindness, the material insecurity and even poverty of the blind, coupled with the poor chances of rehabilitation, blind people were, in effect, outcasts. In old Russia blindness was a social evil.

As A. I. Skrebitsky, a prominent Russian oculist, wrote in 1903, "Only four (at the most five) blind persons in a thousand find their way into a school, a workshop or an alms-house."

The plight of blind people in an alms-house was pithily described by a Russian writer, himself a blind man, Vsevolod Riazantsev, who had lost his sight while working at a fullery and been put into an asylum for the blind:

"In the asylum we felt buried alive. Meagre food, poor clothes and, above all, inaction, oppressive and stupefying. Even letters could not be sent "outside" without the prin-

cipal's permission. Except the church and the public bathhouse, there was nowhere to go. Not that a blind man clad in threadbare poor-house clothes could go out anywhere."

Above all, inaction, oppressive and stupefying... And this despite the fact that thousands of hands were longing for work. Thousands of people without sight were denied any chance to earn their livelihood.

There were small groups of blind people though, who could make some sort of living: craftsmen, musicians, and church choristers. A total of 493 in the 300,000 completely blind people.

Such are the statistics. Impartial and striking.

In Skrebitsky's words, "A deep imprint was left in my memory by a wretched man who gave palpable expression to the feelings and determination of the blind: 'Tell me to put my hand on a white-hot iron, and I would gladly do that, if this would give us some light!' "

But there was no light for them.

After the October Revolution and the Civil War the initiative of the blind in founding a society received support from the Communist Party and the Soviet Government.

In fact, the very attitude towards the blind has changed. As A. V. Lunacharsky, People's Commissar for Education, said at that time, "A blind man, if given the right sort of help, can and must become an efficient collaborator in our regenerated life." Soviet newspapers of the twenties appealed to the masses: "The hungry, uncivilized and oppressed Russia of the tsars has left behind hundreds of thousands of blind people. It is our duty to help them to organize themselves and to provide jobs for them."

As far back as 1922 the first local associations of the blind and small-scale primitive rehabilitation workshops

came into being with the assistance of the People's Commissariat for Social Security.

On April 6, 1925, the First All-Russia Congress of the Blind founded the All-Russia Society for the Blind (V.O.S.).

The blind man was becoming a full-fledged citizen of his country, a person useful to society. In 1928 over two thousand blind men could proudly call themselves "industrial workers." Secondary and higher education establishments had thrown their doors wide open to the blind.

Consistent efforts by the state to improve the well-being of the population have had, as their corollary, better public health services, including the prevention and treatment of eye diseases. As a result, the number of blind people has now markedly decreased, while eye diseases like trachoma are cured without any detriment to the patients' sight, and cases of congenital blindness have become a rare occurrence.

II

Democracy—the Basis of V.O.S.

In the Soviet Union there is a society for the blind in each of the fifteen constituent republics. They are organized along the same lines and cater for the blind people within their respective boundaries.

The All-Russia Society for the Blind exists for blind people living in the Russian Federation. It is a voluntary and independent public body.

The aims and objectives of the Society are rehabilitation of the blind, improvements in their social welfare, and advance in their social outlook, education and vocational training, to enable them to take part in the building of communist society.

Any blind person at the age of 14 or over may become a member of the Society. All members are organized in branches which may be local branches, for blind people living in the same locality, "factory" branches for those working at the same factory, office or college, etc.

All matters relating to employment, living accommodation and services for the blind, and also cultural and sports activities are discussed and resolved by general branch meetings, held at least every three months.

Once a year a general meeting listens to an annual report from the branch bureau and auditing committee. The meeting also elects delegates to conferences.

Such conferences are held by local divisions of the V.O.S. in each autonomous republic, territory or region of the Russian Federation once in two years. The conferences discuss the report of the respective boards and auditing committees, elect new officers for a term of two years, and also delegates to an All-Russia Congress.

In between the conferences all activities of the blind in an autonomous republic, territory or region are organized by the respective boards and their presidiums.

Supreme power within the V.O.S. is vested in the Congress convened once in four years. The Congress listens to and approves (or disapproves, as the case may be) the reports of the Central Board and the Central Auditing Commission of the Society, adopts or revises the Society's Charter, elects the Central Board and the Central Auditing Commission, and handles other matters. In between the congres-

ses, the everyday work of the Society is tackled by the Central Board which gathers every six months and the Board's Presidium.

As can be seen from the foregoing, all officers are elected by, and report back to, the rank-and-file members. The principle of collective leadership guarantees that all problems are solved objectively.

The V.O.S. has a membership of 163,800 which includes 56 per cent with Category I incapacity and 44 per cent with Category II.

In the Soviet Union people are classed as blind not only if they are completely incapable of seeing, but also if they have retained some degree of vision. Blind people with Category I incapacity, for example, are persons with a visual acuity of 0.03 to 0.04, and those with Category II with a visual acuity of 0.04 to 0.08.

A breakdown of the blind in the Soviet Union according to age is as follows: up to 7 years—0.2 per cent; 7-16—2.6 per cent; over 60—33.1 per cent.

Despite the marked increase in the USSR's population since October 1917, the number of blind adults has decreased to one-third, and that of blind children to one-fifth the 1917 figure. This is also true of the Russian Federation.

III

Branches

Branches, both local and "factory," are doing much to serve their members. The blind eagerly attend all their

functions which may be a lecture, an interesting book read aloud, the playing of a tape recording, a social project, or simply a discussion of their everyday needs and matters.

Each branch has a membership of 100 to 200, sometimes more. In local branches, the chairman and secretary of the bureau are paid officers. The members of the bureau are the most energetic and competent people, for their duties are important indeed. They are to know the needs of the rank-and-file, help them in everyday life, find jobs for them, and so on.

A suitable example is provided by the branches in Naro-Fominsk, Borovichi and Syzran, which are ordinary, inconspicuous organizations.

In the town of Naro-Fominsk, Moscow Region, the branch is based on a vocational training centre. It has a membership of 230. This is the kind of problem it has to tackle.

Olga Grashchenko, an assembler of plug receptacles, complained about headache. Apparently her job was too hard on what little vision she had. After a consultation with an oculist and the local trade union, the bureau asked the management to put Grashchenko on another job. Now she feels better.

In another instance, the bureau helped with the timely maintenance of the machine-tools. They called in the maintenance men, discussed their work, and unexpected shutdowns have now become rare.

When the local trade union distributes flats in a newly built block, it listens to what the branch bureau has to say on each person on the waiting list.

If a man withdraws into himself, if his work goes from bad to worse, or he abandons an amateur dramatic group,

the bureau will visit him for a heart-to-heart talk, discuss the cause of the trouble, and help him overcome it.

The bureau also sees to it that all blind people get the jobs they can do best and, that their work is organized on a scientific basis, that they learn how to look after themselves, do without guides in the streets or about the factory. The bureau also organizes braille classes and training in the use of blind-writing equipment.

The bureau has many voluntary assistants. Among them are Alexei Bedov, a foreman, without whom hardly a single track-and-field event or hike is organized; Alexei Shumov, a metal-cutter, who also doubles as a caricaturist and satirical poet; Anatoly Solntsev, an accident-prevention engineer, who designs the local wall newspaper and helps its editors in general.

Local branches are in a much more difficult position. Their members are usually scattered over a considerable area, and the bureau officers have to be "on the move" much of their time. As a rule they are enthusiasts, aware of the importance of the cause they serve. They take books to V.O.S. members, invite them to lectures or socials, or learn their needs.

The local branch in Borovichi, Novgorod Region, has 108 members, and the one in Syzran, Kuibyshev Region, 160 members. They are mainly elderly people, with Category I incapacity. The bureaus thoroughly plan their activities so as to meet the needs and wishes of each member, which they know well. They always keep in touch with the local party and governmental bodies, collective and state farms and seek their assistance when it comes to supplying the blind with fuel, cattle fodder, transport, hay-field allocation and cultural services, seeing that repairs are carried out to their homes, that they get better housing, and so on. Local

Young Communist League members and young pioneers read books and newspapers for the blind old.

In Borovichi, each blind person subscribes to a newspaper or a magazine. Many are the readers of two or three journals published by the Society. The bureau maintains contact with the schools attended by the children of the blind, and this has a wholesome effect on the pupils' academic progress.

Both in Borovichi and Syzran there are voluntary "goodwill services" which help the single blind in the first place. They have repaired the roof for Afanasieva, with Category I incapacity, put up a new fence for Skvortsova, and raised money for the Antonov sisters, single old women.

The branches are always deeply concerned with the lives of their members.

IV

V.O.S.'s Contacts and Cooperation with Science

The problems of the blind are being tackled by many governmental establishments and research institutions. Quite a number of state bodies give the Society practical everyday help with the education and training of the blind. Because of the limited space I can name only some of them.

The RSFSR Ministry of Social Security is responsible for general supervision over the activities of organizations

for the blind and promotes state legislation aimed at improving all-round services for them.

The RSFSR Ministry of Education provides educational facilities for the blind, both children and adults.

The RSFSR Ministry of Culture is in charge for special book services and libraries and also musical education for the blind.

The RSFSR Ministry of Public Health does much to cure and prevent eye diseases.

The Prosveshchenie (Education) State Publishing House puts out books in braille editions.

Many of the industrial ministries keep in constant touch with the Society's vocational training centres.

The RSFSR Council of Ministers' State Planning Committee, in drawing up economic plans, provides for the industrial and economic activities of the V.O.S., and allocates the requisite amounts of raw and source materials, equipment and transport for its enterprises. Their output is sold through state channels.

The scientific basis for tackling practical problems of the blind is laid by a number of research establishments.

The Helmholtz Eye Diseases Research Institute in Moscow, in addition to its work on new methods for the treatment of eye diseases, does much to prevent blindness and carries out large-scale public examination programmes. Research work is under way on problems of defective sight.

The USSR Academy of Educational Sciences' Research Institute of Defectology and its equipment laboratory for the blind in Sverdlovsk work on problems of the education and training of the blind in special schools and also develop study aids, instruments and equipment for them.

Interesting projects are undertaken by the Central and Leningrad Research Institutes of Labour Expertise and the

Employment of the Incapacitated. Their work on the employment of the blind in agriculture, and on the jobs indicated for the blind in industry is both revealing and vital. Of special interest are the investigations carried out by the Functional Vision Research Laboratory at the Leningrad Institute.

Important practical problems are tackled by the Society's Special Design Office. Among other things, it devises instruments, tools, dies and fixtures which facilitate the work of the blind in industry and widen the scope of jobs accessible to them.

It will be no exaggeration to say that all work involved in the education, training and employment of the blind in the Soviet Union is put on a scientific footing.

V.O.S. is the RSFSR's sole representative organization of the blind. It draws up and submits for consideration by the governmental and state bodies all plans and suggestions concerning further improvement in the employment of and cultural and everyday services for the blind. At present one may say that there is hardly a single theoretical or practical problem related to the blind in the solution of which the Society does not take part in one way or another.

V

Vocational Training for the Blind

Having to tackle daily the problems of vocational training and employment for the blind, the Society has accumulated a wealth of experience in these matters. Both scientific

analysis of the problems and vast practical experience have led to a well-conceived system for the training of the blind.

Before a blind man takes up a job anywhere, he has to go through a course of vocational training which may consist of three periods:

— rehabilitation;
— training in a particular operation;
— advanced training.

Rehabilitation is carried out in rehabilitation schools, while training in particular work operations as well as advanced training is accomplished at the Society's training-production centres or vocational schools. A brief description of each period follows.

Work Rehabilitation Schools. In 1963 the Society opened work rehabilitation schools in the city of Cheboksary, Chuvash ASSR, for the blind living in Central Russia, and in the town of Biysk, Altai Territory, for the blind living in Siberia and the Soviet Far East.

The Cheboksary school has a student body of 80, and the Biysk school, 40. The term of instruction in either of them is four months. However, depending on the individual qualities of the trainees, their stay at school may be cut down to two months or extended to seven or eight months or even longer.

The trainees do not pay anything, either for tuition or for their maintenance. Any blind person at the age of 16 and older, mainly those who have become blind later in their lives, can enrol.

They may be people with different case histories. Some of them have lost their sight through accidents. They are usually depressed mentally. They are embarrassed and helpless. Others may have lost their sight in childhood and have all their lives been taken care of by their parents to a point

where now, already grown up, they can neither walk alone nor cater for themselves. They are quite helpless. Other, different cases also come along when the blind person can visualize no prospect or goal in his life and becomes a nuisance to himself and the people around him.

This is where the work rehabilitation school comes in useful. Everything in this school is done to a clear-cut system. The main objective is to instil in the blind complete confidence in their ability to live and work on their own. They are taught how to find their way about, to read and write braille, to use braille and ordinary typewriters, to cater for their own needs, and to do work. Physical training is also included in the syllabus.

Along with ordinary classes, the schools have rooms equipped for special purposes. For training in homecraft there is a complete flat including a bed-room, a dining-room, and a kitchen. The students are taught to cook meals, lay the table, do housework, mend and iron things, and use domestic electrical appliances. In a special room they are trained to use washing machines or wash linen by hand.

The students learn many things about the most common jobs for the blind, how work is organized for them in industry and agriculture, what safety precautions must be taken, and how to protect what sight they have, and also the sense of touch and hearing. To this end, the schools have excellent workshops for wood-working, metal-working, assembly of electrical goods and some domestic appliances, and making of boxes. Women are also taught embroidery, knitting, etc.

The syllabus of the workshops is not designed to train the students in any particular trade. The principal objective is to allow the trainees to get a general idea about methods

of work by means of hearing, touch and other senses, and also to prepare themselves for vocational training at a V.O.S. factory or elsewhere.

Physical training in the rehabilitation schools is of a medical and reconditioning nature and is of far-reaching importance for all categories of the blind. It is one of the most important means of doing away with the grave consequences of blindness and of rehabilitating the blind for work. Here are a few examples of rehabilitation.

K., blind from his childhood, had been under the guardianship of his relatives until the age of 16; he had learned nothing, nor could he serve himself; when put in the school, he wept. K. went through the course of instruction successfully and asked to be sent to a training-production centre. Now he is living in a hostel, is a proficient worker and attends an evening school for young workers.

Y. contracted meningitis when she was four years old. The disease disturbed her motor functions. By the age of 15 she could hardly walk in her room. When her parents put her in the school, they did not hope for anything. But the patience of her teachers and instructors, coupled with P.T. exercises and walks in the fresh air had their effect. The girl has now learned how to look after herself, how to find her way about, and can do several jobs.

N., an accountant, lost his sight as an adult. After a course of instruction at the rehabilitation school, he took to braille and conventional typewriting. On leaving the school N. became a translator from Russian into his native Khakassian.

T., a former worker at a confectionery, lost his sight because of exfoliation of the retina. While in the school, he learned how to find his way in the street, regained his work skills and everyday habits and is now successfully working

in the knitting shop of the Society's training-production centre.

P., a milkmaid, lost her sight in an accident, as a result of a burn. Years of treatment had failed to restore her sight. The woman had completely gone to pieces. While in the school, she learned how to find her way in the street, how to read and write braille, and learned several work skills. Now she has regained confidence in herself and in her ability to work on her own. At present P. works in the bedcover shop of the Society's factory in Omsk.

In the rehabilitation schools the blind learn not to fear darkness; they learn how to work and live on their own. They come to the school helpless, and leave it for their homes rejuvenated, find new jobs or take up the old ones.

They are many, the pupils of the rehabilitation schools—and a different story for each of them.

Vocational Training at the Society's Enterprises. The most important thing is to choose a vocation correctly, taking account of the pupil's desire and abilities and, of course, the medical board's recommendations.

The final choice, however, lies with the pupil himself and the chief engineer who is in charge of vocational training at the Society's centre. Actual instruction is given by the centre's engineers, technicians, foremen and the best workmen, either in groups or individually.

The term of instruction depends on the trade chosen, but it is not less than two or three months. All instruction is done according to syllabuses specially drawn up for each trade. They cover both elementary theory and workshop practice. During their course of instruction the trainees learn to find their way about in the centre's premises, study the properties of the materials they are to work, the tools to be used, operation of some pieces of the equipment,

and manufacturing processes, master the key working techniques, operations or groups of operations, learn rules of accident prevention and factory hygiene, care and maintenance of the machinery, and acquire steady work skills and habits. The instruction ends with qualification tests. The trainee pays nothing for his instruction; instead he draws a monthly allowance at the factory's expense and also gets free coveralls.

After the instruction and qualification tests, the trainee is allowed to work on his own and is assigned a permanent job.

Apart from the training of apprentices, the V.O.S. centres carry out advanced training for the blind already having vocational skills. The course of advanced training can be covered in one or two years, without the trainee having to leave his job. To this end, the training-production centre provides advanced courses, runs schools of proficient work methods, etc. Attending them, the workmen learn entirely new or allied trades, are given general and technical education, and draw upon the experience of innovators. The instruction is again free of charge.

After he has completed his advanced training, the trainee may stay at the same centre or, if he desires so, may be given a job in a state-owned factory.

Some 7 to 7.5 thousand blind people get basic or advanced training in the Society's training-production centres.

Today we may say with confidence that no other country in the world provides instruction for the blind in mass industrial trades on so wide a scale as in the Soviet Union. The blind successfully learn their trades and work as assembly fitters, cold-press operators, drillers, lathe operators, milling-machine operators, and also in a variety of occupa-

tions at box-making, knitting, wood-working and other factories, in brush-making, etc.

Professional Masseurs' School. It is located in Kislovodsk, a picturesque town amidst the Caucasian mountains, one of the country's best health resorts, and is officially known as the Republican Professional Masseurs' School of the All-Russia Society for the Blind. At present, it accepts only 40 trainees. After a new hostel is built for it, the school will have a student body of 100. The term of instruction is two years. Enrolment is open to the blind having secondary education and aged from 18 to 30. The instruction in the school is free of charge. During the term of training the students draw a state allowance and are given accommodation in a hostel. Those of the students who have retained some vision, if they wish so, may take up additional subjects and are then given certificates of methodists in remedial physical exercises and physiotherapy.

The school has well-equipped study-rooms in anatomy and massage, a physiotherapy clinic, and a gymnasium. For prequalification practice the students are sent to work in medical establishments and sanatoriums. The school's syllabus provides courses in anatomy, physiology, surgery, traumatology, biology, internal diseases, physiotherapy, methods and techniques of massage, and some other subjects, a total of twenty-three of them.

The school's staff is made up of experienced physicians and specialists. After state examinations the students are given certificates of secondary special education, qualifying them as professional masseurs. The graduates are given, free of charge and for permanent use, massaging vibrators and provided with portable typewriters to be paid for by instalments.

On top of this, the school runs short-term (two-month) refresher courses; 150 masseurs take these courses annually.

After they leave the school, the blind masseurs are sent back to their home towns or communities where the local public health authorities detail them to work in polyclinics, hospitals and sanatoriums. A total of over 400 partially sighted and blind masseurs work in the Russian Federation. In the Sverdlovsk Region alone there are about 60 of them. There are many blind masseurs in the Stavropol Territory, the Novosibirsk and other regions. This profession is becoming increasingly popular among the blind.

A Music School. The RSFSR Ministry of Social Security runs a state music school for the blind in the town of Kursk. The school offers a four-year course of instruction on the accordion for a student body of 142. It trains accordion players, accordion teachers for other music schools, and leaders for amateur groups. The instruction is free of charge; the students are given accommodation in a state hostel and receive meals also at the state's expense.

The school was founded during the 1941-45 war for war veterans who had lost their sight but wanted musical training. For some years past enrolment in the school has been open to all blind people aged 16 to 30, irrespective of the cause of blindness. After the school the blind are sent to work in community centres, rest homes, music and general-education secondary schools. Each is given an accordion paid for by the Society.

In the near future it is planned to open a class for piano tuners at the school.

Vocational Training of the Blind for Work on Collective and State Farms. The blind are trained to work on collective and state farms at a vocational school in one of the agricultural districts in the Kaluga Region. The school has

been in existence since 1953. It offers a ten-month term of instruction for a body of 50. The trainees are farmers, predominantly Group I sight invalids. They are trained to be coopers and saddlers.

The choice of the two trades is explained by the fact that on any large estate, which any collective or state farm is, people who can make a good cask, a vat in which to pickle vegetables, a trough for a housewife, or make or mend a horse harness, etc. are always welcome. This is why, after the school, the trainees going back to their farms can always utilize their knowledge and skills.

The instruction in the school is free of charge, and the trainees draw a monthly allowance. After the school, they are given a set of tools.

VI

A Place in Life

Work has become a spiritual need of all Soviet people. This is why, despite the fact that in the Soviet Union blind people are paid state pensions, they are loath to stand aside from the nation's effort to build up the might of the country and to lay the material base for communism. This is borne out by the desire of all blind people to work. It is only in a working team that every blind man feels a full-fledged and useful citizen of his country.

The Russian Federation has now fully solved the problem of employment for the blind. Conditions are created

so that any blind man wishing to work can get a job at one of the Society's training-production centres, a state factory or a farm. Today no other country in the world can say it has attained a similar position.

At the end of 1966 there were 76,500 blind people working somewhere in the Russian Federation. The breakdown was as follows:

— 53,000 people working at the Society's enterprises or organizations;

— 13,800 people working at state factories and offices;

— 9,100 people working on collective and state farms;

— 600 people attending higher and secondary special educational establishments.

V.S.O.'s experience shows that the best form of employment for the blind is offered by the Society's training-production centres where the blind have all that is necessary for good work, cultural advancement, everyday needs, environmental sanitation and personal hygiene.

They are also congenially employed at state factories where, by agreement with management, they are given jobs in groups, in the same bay or the same department.

In all cases the Society sees to it that the blind find suitable employment, that is, jobs allocated with due consideration for the recommendations of the medical boards; wide use of jigs and fixtures facilitating the work of the blind or making it safe; measures of sanitation and hygiene intended to preserve what little vision they have and also their sense of touch and hearing; scientific management of work and reliance on the principles of human engineering.

Today the Society already has something to show for its efforts in this direction. The present-day training-production centre is a complex of new, spacious well-lit and

equipped premises for production and welfare purposes, a large, highly mechanized industrial enterprise.

One such enterprise, and a relatively new one, is the No. 11 factory in Moscow. The internal quadrangle is a mass of trees and shrubs. Flower-beds are bright with flowers. Standing a little back from them is a gleaming-white production block, and next to that a nine-storey block of flats. A drive lined with apple-trees leads to the factory. A noiseless lift takes one to the sun-lit assembly departments.

Moving smoothly along the windows is a twenty-metre-long conveyor belt. It carries porcelain insulators, spirals, and bright-red bus-bars which are put up into resistor boxes.

In the pressing department the heavy presses do not seem heavy because they are painted in light colours. The operatives control them with a flip of a finger. Bright-yellow brass contacts fall into receivers. There are lots of flowers everywhere.

The same picture is to be seen in all the departments.

The factory's management shows a good deal of concern for the employees, doing everything it can in order to preserve the remainder of their vision, their hearing and their sense of touch, and to protect their nerves.

Every month the employees are given a medical check-up. Four experienced physicians examine them in the presence of representatives from management and staff organizations. They recommend the most suitable job for each. When they found that Pokrovskaya could not work as a milling-machine operator because the dust of plastic lenses had an adverse effect on her vision, the woman was moved to another operation. Taranicheva used to work at home, but it had a bad effect on her nervous condition; so she was moved to work in the factory. Nezhneva, on the other hand, is a heart-

case, and it is too much for her to come to work every day; so she is now working at home.

Throughout the factory in the corridors and production departments you can see riffled rubber mats to help the blind to find their way about.

In the medical department the employees can consult an internist, an oculist, or take a course of electrophysiotherapy, or have their teeth seen to. There are showers with hot water round the clock, a well-equipped mess-room, and a cosy, attractive lounge. All this makes the work of the blind easier and more congenial. And such factories are many today. The Society is building them at a rate of 180 to 200 thousand cu.m. a year.

VII

Business Activity

As already stated, most of the blind have jobs at the Society's training-production centres. The Society runs a total of 252 such centres. More than 60 per cent of them employ from 200 to 500 people, and 10 per cent, up to a thousand. In 1966 they turned out 337 million roubles' worth of products.

Before speaking about the state of affairs today, a short historical outline would be useful. Before the 1941-45 war the Society's centres were small workshops with primitive equipment and predominantly manual labour. They mainly wove pieces of furniture, baskets, boxes and other products from twigs, made brushes and ropes, and felt boots.

The inflow of blind people in the wake of the 1941-45 war confronted the Society with a major social and political problem. It was not only necessary to find jobs for them, but also to see to it that each blind man could find his place in life and get moral satisfaction from his work. Almost all of them were people with some experience in a certain educational and vocational background. Naturally, they wished to use their knowledge and experience in the manufacture of more sophisticated products.

So the Society had to overhaul its production facilities and to extend the range of industrial skills it could offer or use.

The result was metal-working factories. At first they made small items not requiring any complicated plant or supplies. But gradually, these small shops, sometimes employing fewer than a hundred workmen, grew into large, highly mechanized and well-organized enterprises. The changes have been especially marked during the past decade.

All the former trades of the blind, such as the making of bast, brush and rope products, wicker chairs or baskets, etc., are all a thing of the past. There have appeared not only new, more complicated products, but also new, industrial occupations. The prevailing types of products are now electrical appliances, radio components, light fittings, machines and instruments, and machine-made containers. The few rope and felt-boot shops that have survived are now fully mechanized.

The Society's factories make electric motors, step-down transformers, L.T. and H.T. switchgear, lighting equipment, a wide range of wiring accessories, spares for motor cars, tractors and farming machines, and so on.

There is extensive cooperation between the Society's factories and state-run industries. Over 180 factories are

working in cooperation with the country's major works, either fully or partly. For example, the Society's factories in Cheliabinsk, Rubtsovo, and Volgograd work in conjunction, respectively, with the Cheliabinsk, Altai and Volgograd tractor works; those in Serpukhov and Gorky (No. 2 factory) with the motor works in Ulyanovsk, Moscow and Gorky, those in Bataisk and Ryazan with the Rostov and Ryazan farm-machine works; the No. 3 factory in Leningrad and the one in Pskov, with telephone equipment works; those in Bryansk, Alexandrovsk and Sarapul with radio-engineering works. Such examples can be multiplied.

It stands to reason that the change-over to the manufacture of such complicated products called for a major engineering and technical overhaul. The task was to provide, in each of the production processes, a maximum chance for the blind to work. Concurrently a large number of dies, jigs and fixtures had to be developed so as to make the blind's work safe and open more jobs to them.

Almost all the Society's factories specialize in one or two products each. Everywhere use is made of moving-belt techniques. There are over 70 conveyor lines in operation, and thousands of fixtures have made it possible for the blind worker to participate in the most involved manufacturing processes.

Depending on the complexity of a given process, anywhere from 35 to 50 per cent of the employees in the Society's factories have to be people who can see normally. They are engineers, technicians, toolmakers, setters, clerks and so on. What is interesting is that 70 to 90 per cent of the blind are engaged in direct production processes.

The manufacture of products by the Society's factories is planned by the state and the products are marketed through state channels. Over 50 items are sold abroad.

Each of the Society's factories pays its own way. They are exempt from turnover tax, but contribute 25 per cent of their profits to the state budget. The rest is left at the Society's disposal. It is this money that supports the Society's activities.

Until 1951 the Society received a subsidy from the state. In 1951, as the scope of business activity grew, the production facilities expanded, and the income rose, the Society was in a position to dispense with the state's subsidy.

The Society spends about half its income on capital construction, on the expansion and streamlining of production. About ten per cent of income goes into cultural and sports activities and the maintenance of recreation centres. Five per cent is spent on sanatoriums, health resorts and holidays.

The size of the Society's income is such that it can afford to spend 20 million roubles a year on capital construction and put into service, as already stated, 180 to 200 thousand cu.m of production buildings, and also 40 to 50 thousand sq. m of residential floor area, many public recreation centres and children's establishments.

Today the Society has solid material and technical facilities and a wealth of business experience, so that it can tackle the problem of employment for the blind in the best possible way.

One cannot speak of training-production centres, technology, mechanization, products and profits without mentioning the people working at those centres and making all these valuable products with their own hands.

The employees at each of the Society's factories live a full and interesting life. There, as at any state-run works, one will find a trade union, a Communist Party and a YCL organization, a branch of the Society for the Blind, an inventors' and rationalizers' group, public councils for produc-

tion management, and other public bodies and committees. The workers' production meetings play a leading part in the factory's activity.

Each factory is a participant in the All-Russia socialist competition and at each factory there are leading workers competing to fulfil the production plan ahead of time.

The popular communist labour drive has met with broad response at the Society's factories. About 50,000 employees are competing for the right to be called shock-workers of communist labour. This honorary title has been conferred upon 13,630 people already.

The title team of communist labour has been conferred on 74 departments and 626 teams.

At each factory one can see wall-newspapers, giving the views of the workers on matters of all kinds.

Those who feel like doing so may go in for amateur dramatics or different sports in their leisure time. A visitor to any of the Society's factories can attend concerts given by the factory's employees, and see tireless people studying in economics, history or technology groups.

VIII

Work in the Countryside

The blind living in the countryside are, as a rule, family people well advanced in years. Each has a house of his own, a plot of land, cattle, sheep and poultry. Such a blind man need not be given a job at a factory or move to a

town. In most cases he would refuse to leave his farmstead, his family and his habitual way of life and work.

Yet there are difficulties in providing employment or organizing work for the blind in villages. This is because there are no machines that a blind man can operate on the farm and also because any work in farming involves a good deal of physical labour. Nor is it easy for a blind person to find his way about, as he has to cover great distances (when working in the field, kitchen-garden or orchard). Life is however much easier for a blind person if he has retained at least some degree of vision. With a vision acuity of 0.01 or 0.02 a blind man can well do many operations in agriculture.

As stated earlier, there are 9,100 blind people working on collective and state farms in the Russian Federation. Those with residual vision are successfully working as milkmaids, calftenders, pig-keepers, shepherds, stable-men, carpenters, indoor watchmen, labourers in hot-houses and green-houses in fields and orchards.

Completely blind people work as coopers or saddlers, weave baskets, make brooms, sew or mend sacks, sort vegetables, pack grain, and, in company with a man who can see, may do some work at poultry and rabbit farms, etc.

Extensive research into the work of blind people in agriculture is being carried on by the Central Institute of Labour Expertise and Employment of the Blind. It has drawn up recommendations covering the various types of farming work suitable for people suffering from eye diseases, including those completely blind.

Here are examples of how blind people work on a collective farm.

Lida Kalianova has been working as a milkmaid for several years now. She has thirteen cows to milk. Many peo-

ple on the farm doubted whether she would be able to do the job properly. But Lida has proved that she can, and today she is among the best milkmaids on the farm.

Ilya Venguertsekh has low residual vision. He is a shepherd. His work is the most important thing in life to him. Working on the same collective farm, Zarya (Dawn), Ferzikovo District, Kaluga Region, is Ivan Vilochkov. He lost his sight at the front in 1945, shortly before victory and is paid a comfortable pension. Yet he cannot do without work. Now he makes brooms and baskets for the collective farm.

Many of the blind working in the countryside are enthusiasts in their respective fields. And much credit for this is due to the vocational school that trained them for work in collective and state farms.

IX

Serving a Common Cause

In tsarist Russia only eight blind people were able to get higher education, because universities would not accept the blind.

It was only after the October 1917 Revolution that education was put within the reach of the blind, and the number of blind students in secondary and higher educational establishments has since been growing yearly. Accordingly, many of the blind are numbered among our intellectuals. Among the students at higher and secondary educational establishments in the Russian Federation there are 600

blind people. They all draw a state allowance which is 50 per cent greater than the ordinary one, and are also paid pensions after the first year at college or university.

It is no wonder, therefore, that blind men have found jobs not only in industry or on farms. About 4,000 of them have become intellectual workers, which is quite a number. Of this figure, 174 are faculty members at colleges and universities; 283 people are lecturers at special secondary educational establishments, over 400 people are secondary school teachers, more than a thousand are musicians, singers, leaders of music circles and choirs. There are many blind people working as lawyers, barristers, writers, etc. To this one may add about 500 blind people working as industrial executives, factory superintendents, foremen, computer programmers, etc.

In Moscow and Leningrad the Society has offices which organize concerts and recitals for blind musicians and actors on open-air stages, at community centres and in public parks.

There are 17 doctors of science and 93 masters of science among blind faculty members of colleges and universities and the staff of research establishments. Many of them have made valuable contributions to the progress of Soviet science.

Academician Pontryagin, one of the country's leading mathematicians, is widely known both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Now he heads the division of ordinary differential equations at the USSR Academy of Sciences' Mathematics Institute. He has made many important discoveries and founded a new branch of mathematics, topological algebra. His monograph *Continuous Groups* has won him a State Prize. For another work of his *Optimal Control Theory* he has been awarded a Lenin Prize.

Vladimir Zubov, a young scientist, has also contributed much to science. He lost his sight as a result of a wound, attended a school for blind children, then entered the Mechanics and Mathematics Department at Leningrad University. In 1955 Zubov took his master's degree in physics and mathematics, and in five years, was awarded a doctor's degree for his work, *Some Problems of the Theory of the Stability of Motion*. Now Zubov is a professor at Leningrad University and heads a control computer laboratory and a computer centre. He is an enthusiastic proponent of the idea of giving jobs to the blind at computer centres.

Anatoly Vitushkin lost his sight in an accident while he was a cadet at a pre-service military school (known as "Suvorov schools" in the Soviet Union). But neither the school's command nor his friends let him down. He graduated from the Suvorov school with a gold medal. During his fifth year at the Physics and Mathematics Department of Moscow University Vitushkin published four scientific papers. After post-graduate studies, he published his works *On Polyhedral Variations* and *On the Difficulties Involved in Tabulation Problems*. Now Vitushkin is a doctor of physics and mathematics and a senior research worker at the Mathematics Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Valentin Bochkarev has spent years working in the field of history. He lost his sight in his youth. Yet he graduated from the Department of History at Moscow University. He has written over 250 papers. Now he is a doctor of history and a merited worker in science. He still continues his work at the Teachers' Training College in the town of Kolomna.

Vladimir Tikhomirov was a geologist when the 1941-45 war broke out. He was blinded at the front. Despite this misfortune, Tikhomirov went on with his studies and wrote a dissertation *The Minor Caucasus during the Upper-Cretace-*

ous Period for which he was immediately awarded a doctor's degree in geology and mineralogy instead of the intermediate master's degree. To date, he has published 150 scientific papers, some of which have appeared in the United States, France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, China and Rumania. He heads the Division of the History of Geology at the USSR Academy of Sciences' Geological Institute. Recently he has been elected a corresponding member of the International Academy of the History of Sciences.

Anatoly Lopyrin, D. Sc. (Biology), is also a scientist of world renown. He lives in the town of Stavropol and is interested in sheep breeding. Having lost his sight during the 1941-45 war, he did not abandon his vocation, and today he is an active scientist, inquisitive and with a vast store of knowledge.

Many blind scholars are active in the field of education. Boris Kovalenko, corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Educational Sciences, for a long time headed the department of blind education at the Herzen Teachers' Training College in Leningrad.

Special mention should be made of Ogla Skorokhodova, M. A. (Education). Born blind, deaf and mute, she has been able to overcome this tremendous handicap, and, after years at school and college, has become an eminent scholar. She has written two moving books, *How I Perceive the World Around Me* and *How I Perceive and Imagine the World Around Me*. The books have been published in many countries. At present Skorokhodova is a senior research officer at the Institute of Defectology of the USSR Academy of Educational Sciences.

This list may be extended to include the names of B. Guisin, Ph. D. (Chemistry); I. Proskuriakov, A. Parkho-

menko and Y. Dolzhenko, all of whom have their Master of Sciences degrees in physics and mathematics; M. Trubitsyn and I. Barer, both with Master of Arts (History) degrees; Professor F. Krokhalev, Ph. D. (Economics); Professor V. Sverlov, Ph. D. (Education); M. Margolin, Merited Inventor, and many others.

In literature and the arts there are also many gifted blind people who have made valuable contributions to culture and learning.

The name of Nikolai Ostrovsky, the author of *How the Steel Was Tempered* and *Born of the Storm*, is known in nearly all countries and his books are read with avid interest by millions of young men and women.

Vsevolod Riazantsev and Gavriil Dobrzhinsky are talented writers of an older generation. They have written many popular stories and plays.

Edward Asadov, an ex-officer (artillery) lost his sight on the battlefield near Sevastopol. There were many long, agonizing days of treatment and hopes. But the hopes were not realized. Yet Asadov graduated from the Literary Institute and today he is one of our most popular poets. Volumes of his poems are sold in large prints.

Leonid Zuzin graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire with honors and has become a famous pianist.

Ivan Panitsky is a well-known accordion player and has been awarded the honorary title Merited Artiste of the Republic.

Nikolai Polikarpov, a blind composer and Merited Worker in the Arts, has composed a great number of wonderful songs which are sung in concert-halls, over the radio and on TV programmes by professional singers and amateurs.

Lina Po, a ballet dancer and teacher of choreography by

training, turned to sculpture after she had lost her sight. In fact, she had always dreamt of being a sculptor. After many years of strenuous and persistent work, Lina Po began to create works of high artistic value.

Among her works are the Ballerina, Dance with a Veil, and The Jump, which has won special prize. She has also done busts of Pushkin, Chekhov and Paganini, and also sculptures on themes connected with the fight against fascism and for peace. Her works can be seen in the best museums and art galleries of Moscow, Leningrad and other Soviet cities.

The list of blind scientists, scholars and workers in the arts might be extended to include many more names as interesting and no less worthy of mention.

One feels compelled to say a few words about the talented lawyers and barristers, the small group of 70 people who represent a new occupation among the blind—computer programmers, the many efficient executives, and others. But one cannot simply do that because of lack of space.

In short, blind intellectuals are active in many fields of human endeavour, contributing much to the progress of science and culture.

X

Education

The Soviet law on obligatory eight-year education fully applies to blind children. All blind children of school age attend classes, except those who have additional handicaps

(mental backwardness, paralysis, etc.). Severely handicapped children are put in special children's homes under the Ministry of Social Security.

In schools for blind children the normal eight-year syllabus of general education is extended over a period of nine years, and the ten-year syllabus over eleven years.

The Russian Federation has a total of 52 special schools for blind children and 16 schools for children with poor sight. They are boarding schools. Those for blind children have a total of 6,900 pupils. It is a reassuring fact that only 16 per cent of them are absolutely blind, and the remainder are children with a visual acuity of up to 0.05. Those for children with poor sight have a total of 2,600 pupils. They admit children with a visual acuity of 0.06 to 0.3. For some time past there has been a steady decline in the number of totally blind children. So classes for blind children have to be brought up to the normal complement with partially blind children.

The normal complement for classes of blind children is ten to twelve pupils, and for mentally handicapped blind children, five to seven pupils. Teachers at schools for blind and partially blind children are paid 25 per cent more than teachers at ordinary schools.

The nine-year boarding schools for blind children provide a good knowledge in accordance with the syllabus of the general-education eight-year school, and polytechnical training for work.

The eleven-year boarding schools for blind children provide a good knowledge of the subjects covered by the syllabus for the ten-year ordinary school, and polytechnical and vocational training. They also qualify their pupils for admission to higher educational establishments on a par with other children.

The state takes over the upbringing of blind children when they are still at pre-school age. There is a special children's home in the town of Ufa which accepts blind children at the age of four to five years. There, experienced teachers prepare them for their first year at school. The children are taught how to look after themselves, to find their way about the house and in the street, and to keep themselves clean and tidy. They make models in clay and plasticine, listen to music and take part in gay games and pastimes.

There are also pre-school groups in some of the boarding schools.

The basic principle in teaching blind children is the use of tangible aids (just as visual aids play an important part in the education of normally sighted children). Many of the teachers are working on their own on improvements in existing study aids and the designing of new ones. Quite a number of study aids in physics and chemistry have been developed by the laboratory of blind education equipment in Sverdlovsk. They are now made by state factories under the Ministry of Education, and also by the Society's special workshop. Some of the study aids, especially geographical maps, globes, and geometrical figures, are made by the Moscow school for blind children.

The schools have specially equipped study-rooms and laboratories where the pupils can back their theoretical knowledge with experiments. The study aids provided in these rooms and laboratories enable the blind children to follow a chemical reaction, to measure temperature, determine electric current characteristics and carry out a variety of experiments with electricity, light and so on.

Relief globes and maps in classes on geography and history, stuffed animals in classes on biology, scale models of

structures, buildings and machines, all serve to enrich a child's idea of the world around him. In junior forms the children are taught how to make models in plastiline, paper and pasteboard. In the fifth to seventh forms they learn the necessary skills involved in joinery and book-binding, and the girls are taught to sew. In the eighth to tenth forms, classes in typewriting and some other vocations are given.

The curriculum at schools for blind children provides time for individual and group sessions for the correction of defects (remedial gymnastics, speech development, attitude control, etc.) in the first to fourth forms.

A very important part in the general and vocational education of blind children is assigned to practice in the school's workshops or at the Society's factories. Strong links between school and everyday life and production are important means in the development of blind children.

Both tuition and board at boarding schools for blind children are free of charge. It is relevant to note that before the October 1917 Revolution there were 28,000 totally blind children in Russia, and only 600 of them, or 2.1 per cent, were able to attend the twenty-four small, poorly equipped schools that existed at the time. On leaving such schools the blind could not go on to college or university.

If, for one reason or another, blind youngsters fail to complete the eleven-year course of instruction, they can go to work. But they may also wish to have secondary education. To meet their desire, there are 28 evening schools for working youth and five correspondence schools for the blind, all run by the RSFSR Ministry of Education. These schools are also open to blind adults wishing to continue their education without leaving their jobs. There are 4,800 such people now. Some of the blind attend ordinary evening schools for working youth.

During the past four years 3,970 blind people have completed eight-year and ten-year education concurrently with their work in industry.

The experience of evening and correspondence schools for the blind shows that the students acquire a solid knowledge enabling them to continue their education at colleges and universities and work in the field chosen.

XI

Recreation

It is a good thing to have enjoyable recreation after a day's work. And the blind have more time for this. For in the Soviet Union they work only six hours a day.

Then where and how can a blind man spend his leisure time?

The Society runs 129 well-equipped recreation centres and 902 recreation rooms. These recreation centres and rooms offer a wide choice of activities. Any one can go in for his favourite pastime—choral singing, participation in an instrumental ensemble, or they may perform as soloists. There are amateur dramatic groups staging serious plays, and also dancing and choreographic groups. Those interested in more serious matters may join groups studying technological and economic subjects. Separate activities are organized for the children of the blind.

In the recreation centres the blind can hear interesting lectures on science, technology, history, economics or po-

litics, attend a concert or go to a social. Hikes and various sporting events are also arranged.

The various concert groups at the recreation centres and rest rooms embrace a total of 20,800 people; the sports groups and sections, 7,500 people; the chess and draught clubs, 13,700 people; literary, homecraft and other groups, 13,100 people.

The wide development of amateur arts contributes to aesthetic, moral and spiritual upbringing and education. Some of the choral, drama, music and dance groups have won great popularity. This is especially true of those at the Society's training-production centre in Kaluga, the recreation centres in Taganrog, Gorodets and Sverdlovsk, the academic choir of the Moscow City recreation centre, the male voice choir of the Ivanovo recreation centre, the Russian folk song choir of the Bryansk centre, the national choirs of Chechen-Ingushetia, Udmurtia and Bashkiria, the dance group of the Krasnodar recreation centre, the national dance group of North Ossetia, the accordion band of the Leningrad Palace of Culture, the brass bands and variety orchestras of the Kislovodsk, Rostov and other recreation centres.

Their high standards of performance make our groups welcome in the recreation centres and houses of culture at state factories, collective and state farms before numerous audiences.

The Society organizes contests of amateur groups, once in two years on a regional scale, and once in four years for the whole of Russia. The Society's amateur groups also participate in contests organized by trade unions. The participants put in a great deal of effort in preparation for these contests, which apart from being enjoyable are valuable creative experience.

Physical training and sports have become part and par-

cel of the blind's life. Work on physical education of the blind is carried on in a systematic and planned way, and has acquired a mass character. It is carried on in cooperation with the country's sports organization, and not in the seclusion of the Society. Blind athletes are members of the famous Spartak sports club. Sports are especially popular with young people. Daily P. T. exercises have become a "must" in all the Society's training-production centres. To this end, a ten-minute break is announced in the middle of each working day, and a P. T. instructor guides the employees through their "daily dozen." A total of 40,000 people take part in these exercises.

Each of the Society's training-production centres has P. T. and sports groups and sections. All work in this field is organized by voluntary councils. The most popular sports are gymnastics, athletics, swimming, academic rowing, wrestling, speed skating, skiing, chess, draughts, and hiking.

Every year regional contests in all the sports are held, which are preceded by mass competitions within each sports organization. Every two years the Society holds an All-Russia spartakiad for blind athletes. These competitions draw still more young people into sport.

The best athletes of the Society take part in international sports competitions for blind youth. That our athletes are well trained is confirmed by the fact that in the correspondence contests in track and field events held in Leningrad in 1958 and in Prague in 1965 the Soviet team ranked first both in individual and team events. In 1965 in Prague they won nine out of ten gold medals.

Many blind people join sighted people on walking tours of the vast expanses of the Soviet Union. In addition to active recreation, they improve their health, harden their bodies, develop endurance, agility and ability to orient them-

selves. While on hiking trips they learn the necessary skills, get into closer contact with nature, visit historical monuments, and get first-hand knowledge about the work and life of other people. The requisite equipment is paid for by the management and trade unions of the Society's factories.

One can see clusters of tents standing amidst a forest on the bank of a river in a picturesque locality not far from Leningrad. It is the camp belonging to the Society's Leningrad division. On Saturdays many campers both blind and sighted, workers, engineers and office employees of Leningrad factories, come here, very often with their families, to spend a weekend. They can go fishing, swimming, or hiking.

The most popular games among the blind are chess and draughts. Annual competitions, both individual and for teams, attract large number of men, women and children.

Among the blind chess and draughts players are 500 first-category players, four holders of the title candidate for USSR master of chess, twelve candidates for master of draughts and three USSR masters of draughts.

Blind chess and draughts players are strong rivals to those who can see and often emerge victorious in city and regional competitions.

To read or listen to a good book is also a pleasant pastime for blind people. For books are treasuries of spiritual wealth. In their effect on the minds of men books are second to no other media.

In the Russian Federation, each regional centre has special state-run libraries for the blind or departments of braille editions within public libraries. There is a total of 97 such libraries, each serving the blind living in the region. For better service, the state libraries for the blind organize mobile book stores which are attached to travelling

libraries at branches of the Society. There are 920 such libraries within the Society. The stock of books in them is changed at regular intervals. The blind living in remote localities can get the books they need from a state library by post. Or the literature can be taken round by librarians on special trucks.

The libraries for the blind in the Russian Federation have a total of 1.2 million books in braille editions.

In 1963 the Society set up a studio to transcribe books onto magnetic tape. Since then the studio has been turning out these "talking books" at a rate of over 100 titles with a total "print" of 120 to 150 copies each. Blind readers can get these "talking books" through the appropriate regional libraries. At the Society's request, state-run factories are making tape recorders and spools with a playing time of 20 or 21 hours. When used on a large scale, they will radically improve the "talking-book" service for blind readers.

Fiction is daily read over the public address systems at the Society's training-production centres. Public readings are also arranged at recreation centres and libraries. The books thus read are then discussed in public, which also makes for a deeper understanding. In the libraries the readers can always find an exhibition of new books and ask the librarian about a particular book.

In Moscow there is a Republican Central Library for the Blind. It is a scientific and methodological centre which supervises the activities of the libraries for the blind in the Russian Federation. It also carries on research work in the field of library science, bibliography, book services for blind and partly blind people. It carries on a wide exchange of books with similar establishments abroad and has contacts with librarians in other countries.

All libraries for the blind in the Soviet Union are state-run and maintained.

Books for the blind are published in the RSFSR by the Prosveshchenie (Education) publishing house. Every year it turns out a total of 400 titles in mass braille editions. Among them are textbooks for primary and secondary schools, Soviet and foreign literature, books on history, economics, philosophy, politics and music, reference books, children's books etc. The total print of braille editions amounts to 800-880 million pages a year. The books are printed in a special well-equipped printing works also run by the state.

The blind in the Russian Federation also have periodicals printed for them. These are the *Life of the Blind* political and literary monthly with a circulation of 7,800 braille copies and 13,800 ordinary copies, *Appeal*, a political monthly with a circulation of 4,000 braille copies, publishing articles on philosophy, economics and politics; the monthly *Literary Readings* with a circulation of 4,100 braille copies, publishing the latest works by Soviet and foreign authors; and also braille quarterlies, such as *Assistance to Amateur Concert Groups, Assistance to the Masseur, Assistance to Cultural and Educational Workers, Physical Culture and Sports* and *Chess and Draughts*. There is also the monthly *Soviet Schoolchildren* published for blind pupils by the RSFSR Ministry of Education.

To sum up what has been said above, the Society makes every effort to provide good facilities for recreation, education and cultural activities for the blind. And everything is done to meet the requirements of its members.

XII

Welfare and Social Security

This chapter will be about the concern that is shown for the blind in the Soviet Union, about the privileges they are granted, and the pensions paid to them. But before that, it is worth while dwelling on the welfare service for the blind, to which the Society pays special attention.

As stated earlier, the Society builds modern blocks of flats with as much as 50,000 square metres of floor area annually. In other words, each year as many as 6,000 Society members, including their families, and other employees of the Society's training-production centres and factories move to new flats. The flats are built close to the centres and factories, so that the blind have as little difficulty as possible in getting to and from work.

Next to the blocks of flats are usually built kindergartens, creches, shops, canteens and community centres. Such a layout of housing estates greatly simplifies life for the blind. It is made still easier by the provision of special household appliances, such as sock-menders, thread-pullers, vegetable-choppers, fish-cleaners, measuring devices for liquids and such things as sugar and flour, collapsible sticks, tape measures, braille writing devices and typewriters, special clocks and watches, tape recorders, transistor radios, and many other things without which a blind man would find life much harder. All these can be bought in the Rassvet (Dawn) specialty shop, run by the Society, in Moscow. The shop also sells fiction, textbooks, sheet music, etc.

On request, the shop can arrange for delivery of goods

to buyers not only in Moscow but anywhere in the Soviet Union. It is interesting to note that the shop posts at least 85,000 parcels every year.

The government sees to it that there is an ample supply of household goods for the blind and makes it a point that state-run factories plan for their manufacture in production schedules.

The Society spends 3 to 3.5 million roubles a year to provide summer holidays with toning up treatment at sanatoriums for its members and summer vacations for their children. It pays for the accommodation of 15,000 people at rest homes and general-purpose sanatoriums annually. A blind person and a companion may spend 12 days at a rest home, or 26 days at a sanatorium, free of charge in either case. The Society also pays, fully or partly, the cost of travel to the sanatorium and back.

Part of the money goes to organize summer holidays for the children of blind parents and blind schoolchildren. Beautiful summer camps have been built in Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov, Chelyabinsk and many other communities throughout the country. All work connected with children's holidays is done jointly by the Society and the trade unions. More than 11,000 children go to summer camps every year.

There is a special sanatorium for the blind, the Truzhenik (Toiler), located in the town of Pyatigorsk. A total of 1,800 people go there to have a holiday or rest-cure. Construction work is nearing completion on a modern sanatorium for 250 at Gelendzhik on the Black Sea coast, which is to open in 1968.

Six years ago the Society opened a school for guide dogs for the blind, which trains 110 to 120 dogs a year. The trained dogs are lent to the blind free of charge.They help their

masters to avoid obstacles and find their way in a familiar or an unfamiliar locality. The school has received many letters of thanks for the four-legged friends of the blind.

In conclusion I feel necessary to mention the Society's Institute for the Advancement of Executives, Engineers and Technicians. The multi-faceted activity of the Society makes it essential that the people heading individual establishments or areas of work share their experience, look for and disseminate better methods of work, planning and business activity. So, once in three years the Institute arranges refresher and advanced courses lasting one or two months for the managers, engineers, economists and accountants of the Society's training-production centres and factories, and also elected officers and functionaries. The knowledge they get helps them with their practical work.

All that has been said in this booklet about the welfare of the blind is the result of the concern that the Soviet government shows for them. It is thanks to this concern and the favourable conditions provided that the All-Russia Society for the Blind has been growing and gaining in strength.

During the years of the Soviet system an all-embracing system of social security has been set up in the country, based on the principles of socialist humanism and democracy and designed to meet the material and cultural requirements of the incapacitated to an ever increasing extent.

Instead of charity and philanthropic organizations and private donations, which was the case in pre-revolutionary Russia, the blind have a social security system which is a state function and an integral part of the Soviet social system.

The fact that the social security system in the Soviet Union is run by both state and voluntary organizations makes it possible to meet the needs of the blind to the fullest

possible degree. Among other things, they are granted privileges with regard to pensions.

The old-age pension is granted to blind men at the age of 50 with a work record of not less than 15 years, and to blind women at the age of 40 with a work record of not less than 10 years. Blind people are also entitled to a disability pension on a par with other people if the disability has been caused by an accident at work or an occupational disease. Then the pension is granted regardless of the disabled person's work record.

In the case of some general disease, the disability pension can be granted only if the applicant has a work record of a certain number of years at the date of application, depending on his or her age. Thus, blind persons applying for a disability pension after a general disease should have a work record of one year at the age of 20, one and a half years at the age of 23, etc.

At present, 84 per cent of the blind are paid state pensions in the Russian Federation.

Special care is taken of old people who are completely or partially blind. If, for one reason or another, they cannot live with their families any longer, they can be put in homes for the aged, if they so wish, free of charge.

The blind employed by state factories, public utilities, state farms and medical establishments work six hours a day and have paid leave of 24 working days. Blind people who cannot work every day on grounds of health have additional days off at the Society's factories. Blind people are exempt from income tax on all kinds of earnings. All blind people with Category I incapacity receive the full pension regardless of whether they have additional sources of income, and so also do all such people with Category I and Category II incapacity who are ex-servicemen.

Blind people attending higher educational establishments or technical schools draw state allowances which are 50 per cent greater than they are for other students.

Those in the fifth to eleventh forms at correspondence and evening schools for blind adults, and also students of correspondence and evening higher and secondary special educational establishments get a subsidy from the Society to pay for the services of a reader.

The Society also pays for the services of reader-secretaries while graduate students work on their graduation projects, for a period of twenty-four months immediately prior to the presentation of a dissertation in the case of post-graduates, and for twelve months after graduation in the case of graduates. They can also buy typewriters and tape recorders on easy terms.

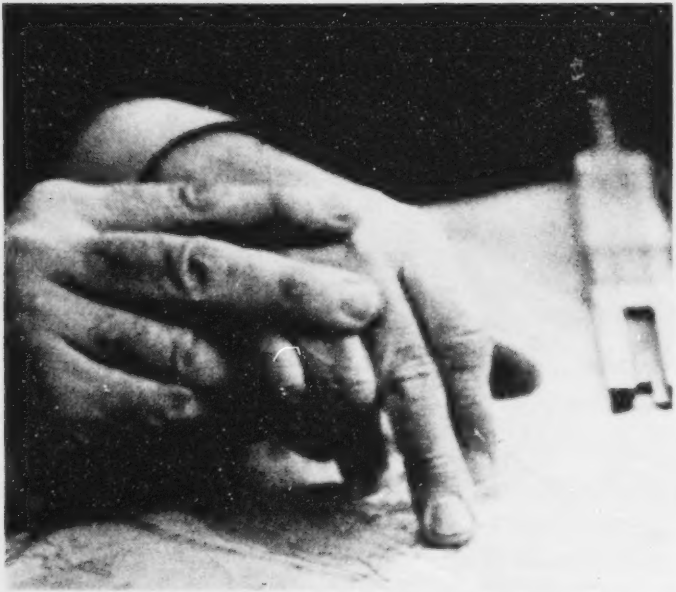
The blind use city transport free of charge, and they do not have to pay postage on letters and parcels containing matter printed or written in braille.

The training-production centres of the Society are exempt from turnover tax, while the Society's organizations and establishments are exempt from local taxes and land rent.

* * *

The multi-faceted work carried on by the All-Russia Society for the Blind enables its members to engage in political and social activity and encourages their active participation in the building of communism in our country.

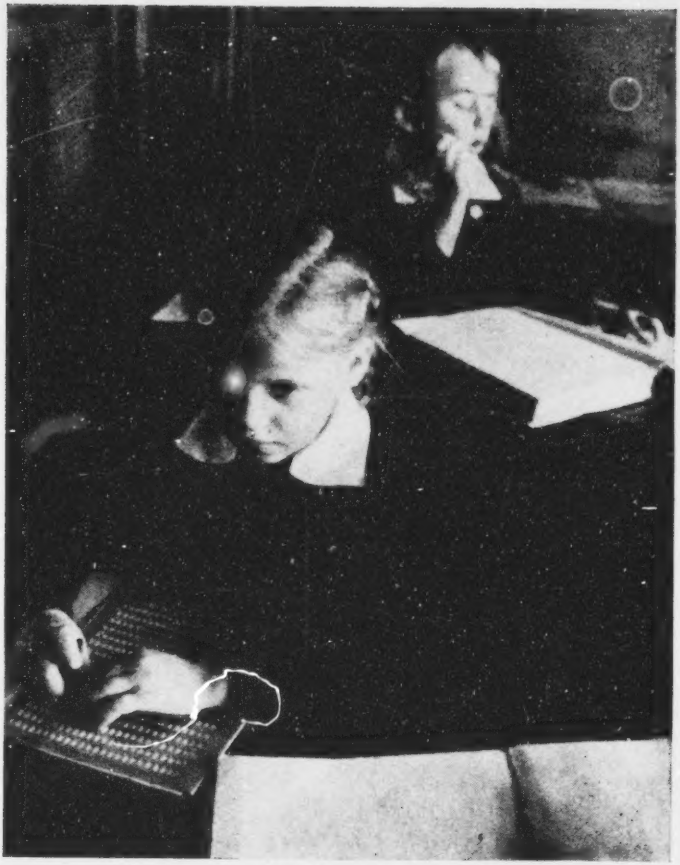
Today we may say with confidence that the Soviet Union has solved the problems of the material security, employment, education and welfare of the blind. Along with all Soviet people, the blind citizens of the USSR live a full and creative life.



When a person loses his sight his hands develop heightened sensitivity, seeming to take over some of the functions of the eyes. He regains his hope for the future and also, to a considerable extent, his ability to work

First-year pupils hard at it

The Boarding School for the Blind in Moscow. A geography lesson



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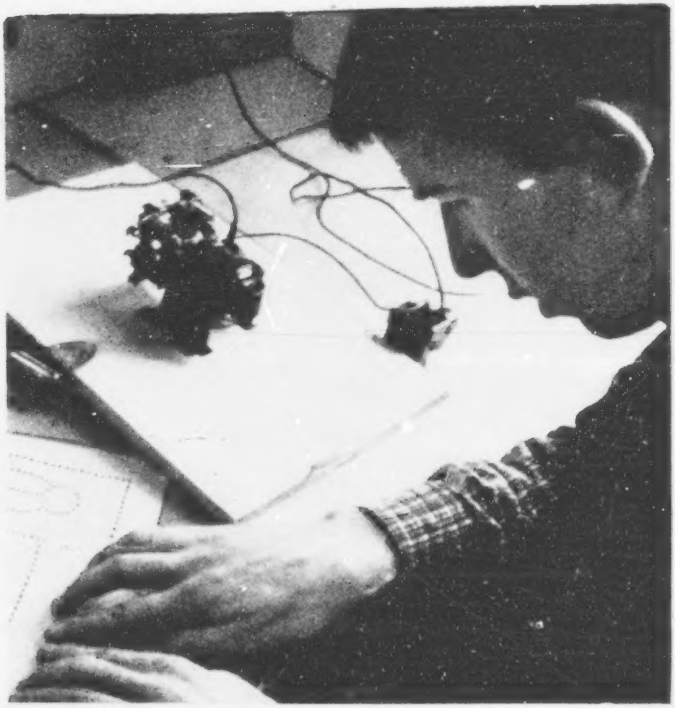
At a school for the rehabilitation of the blind at Cheboksary, Chuvash ASSR

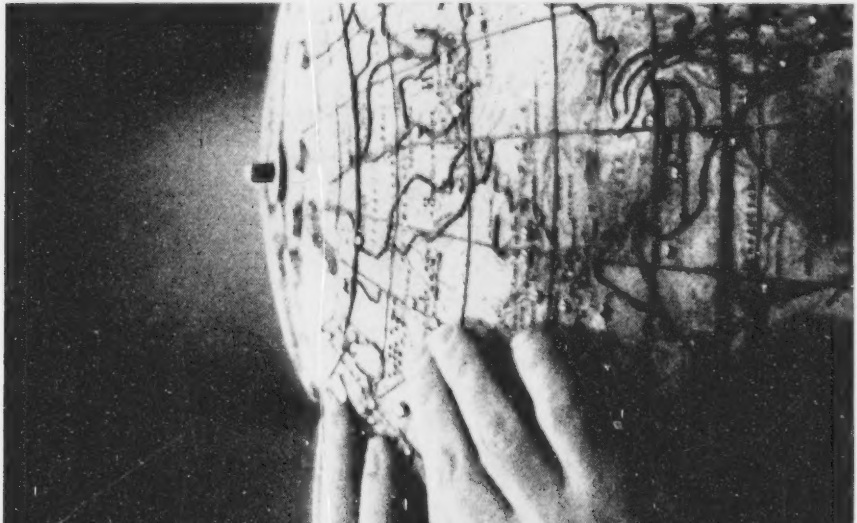
Typists in the making

Reading an electrical circuit by touch



Chemistry and draughtsmanship—just two of the many subjects taught at the Boarding School for the Blind in Moscow

Can they be classed as deprived children?



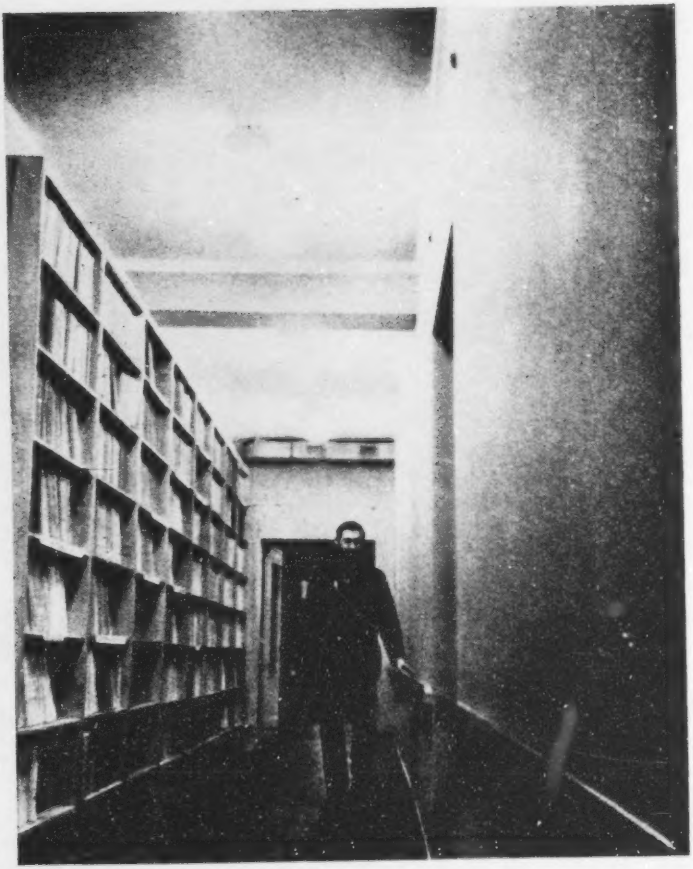
Getting the feel of continents and oceans
Preparing for a concert

It all starts with little sketches—and some of the schoolchildren end up by doing such delightful pictures as this one by Seryozha Akhferov of Moscow. It is called "When the Lilac Blooms"

A choir at the vocational-training enterprise in Riga

Intent on a game of chess

Special rails along the walls act as a guideline

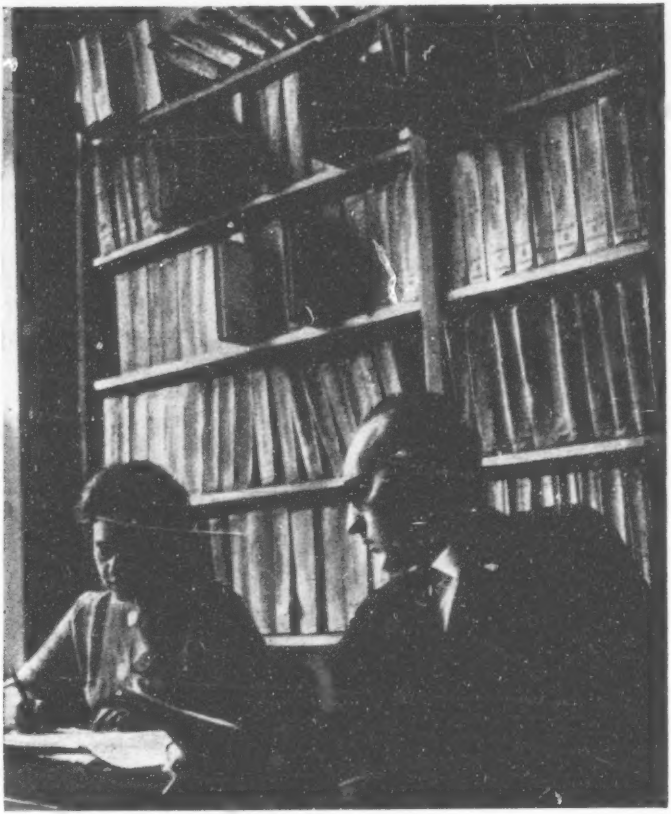


Providing sound effects for a show at a House of Culture

Assembling electric motors at a Moscow factory for the blind

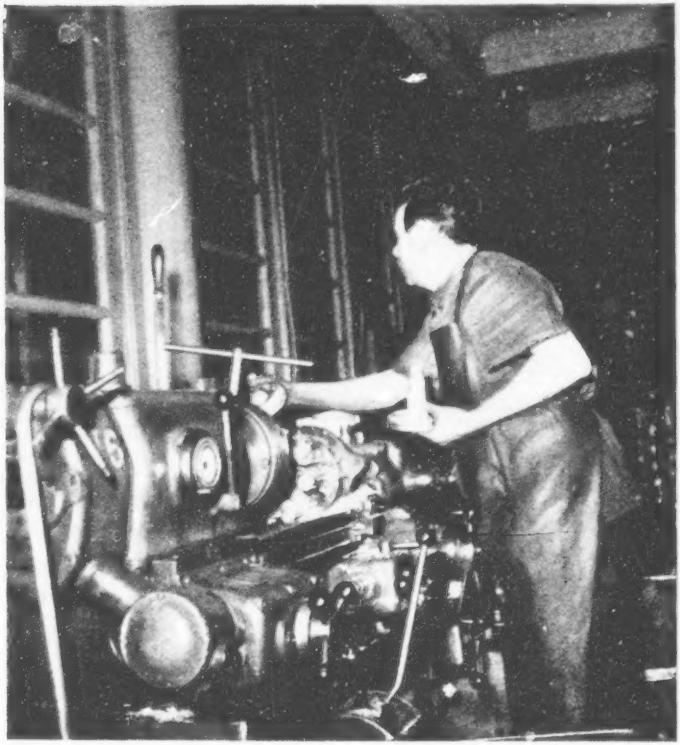
Moscow has a special shop for the blind

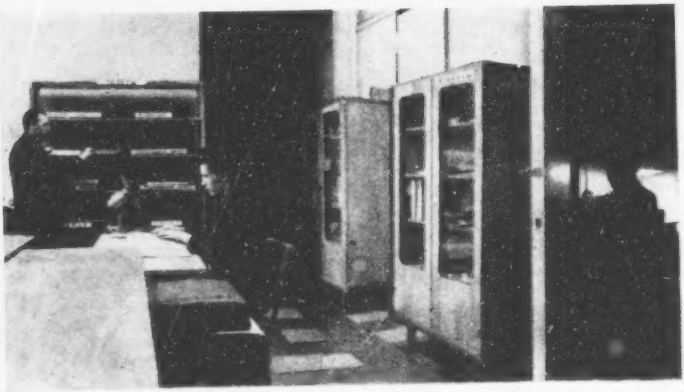
The Central Library for the Blind in Moscow. Yevgeny Santsevich is working on a textbook of electrical engineering



Assembling fluorescent lamp chokes at the vocational-training enterprise at Kolomna

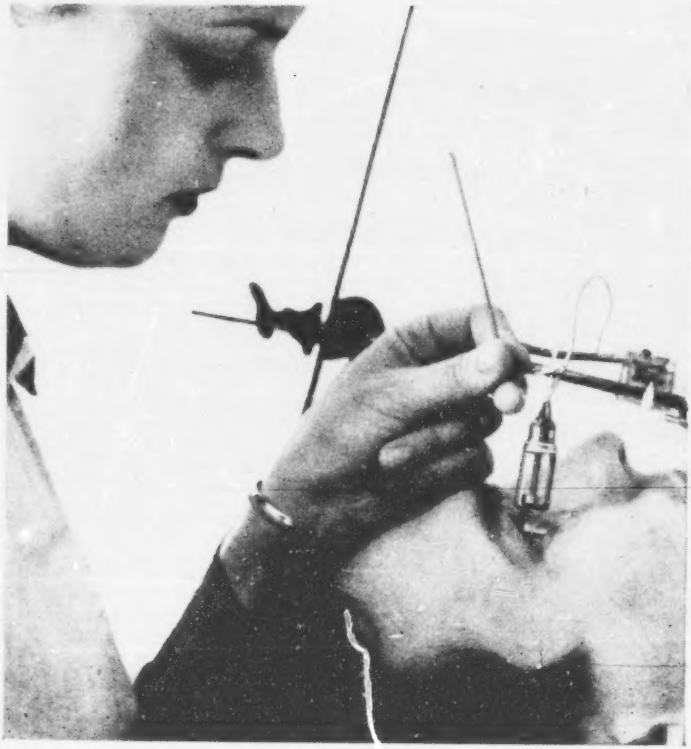
This machine operator is just as sure of himself as any sighted worker





A municipal library for the blind. On the right is a booth for listening to "talking books"

Yevgeny Klyushnikov, who is in charge of the reading room at the library run by the Leningrad branch of the All-Russia Society for the Blind



The blind are regularly examined by eye-specialists

A school oculist examining a pupil

The Katin family out for a stroll in Izmailovsky Park, Moscow. Mother and father are blind, the children are sighted

In a Moscow street

The fateful moment as the professor removes the bandages after an operation and the patient finds she can see

Alexander Zotov, a blind architect (centre), at a session of the All-Union Congress of Architects in Moscow